

THREE

[7.]

LETTERS

T O

Dr. Sherlock

CONCERNING

Church-Communion.

WHEREIN

'Tis enquired whether the Doctor's
Notion of *Church-Communion* be not
too narrow and uncharitable, both
to Dissenters, and Men of larger
Principles.

By a *LAY-MAN* of the Church of *England*,
and in constant Communion with it.
at least so pretending.

LONDON, Printed for *Jonathan Robinson*, at the
Golden Lion in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1683.

THE

LEWIS

Dr. Sherlock

[illegible]

is equipped with the Doctor's

... ..
... ..
... ..



To the Reader.

I Hope these Papers will not fall into any Man's Hands, who counts it not a great blessing to have Kings for Nursing Fathers to God's Church : To have the true Religion establish'd and guarded by humane Laws. And perhaps 'tis no absurdity to suppose, that Men may as well continue Members of the National Church, notwithstanding their breaking many positive Laws made for the outward management and ordering of it, tho' not fundamental and necessary to its being : As he who incurs the Penalty of any Statute of the Realm about Civil Affairs, may however be a sound Member of the State, if he keep from Treason or other Capital Crimes.

Nay possibly, That there should be several Religious Assemblies living by different Customs and Rules, and yet continuing Members of the National Church, is not more inconsistent than that particular Places should have their particular Customs and By-Laws differing from the Common Law of the Land, without making a distinct Government.

Shure I am, an outward Government in the Church is requisite, if it were only for the restraining those Men who out of confidence of their own Abilities, will be venting Notions, which none but Men of great subtilty can make one believe to be agreeable, either to Scripture, or to that Doctrine to which they have subscribed and declared their unfeigned Assent and Consent. And methinks it were enough to remove Mens prejudices against Episcopal

To the Reader.

Government, to consider how needful it is that some of the most learned and discreet should be chosen from among the Herd of Clergy-men, to oversee, admonish, and censure those who are apt to go beyond their due Bounds. Yet even within this Government, it may sometimes become the Duty of one of the Laity, to take upon him to reprove his Teacher, when he apprehends the Doctrine to be dangerous: In which case, unless he remonstrate against it, he may be thought to communicate with him in his Error, which possibly may be as sinful as communicating in a Schism, which Dr. Sherlock frights us with. Out of respect to whom I must say, that I had rather be mistaken in that sense which I conceive ought to be put upon his Sermons about Church-Communion, than be able to justify, That the Objections to which he never vouchsafed an Answer, were neither impertinent to his Discourses, nor frivolous.

His Notion of a Political Union of true Believers to Christ, I had long since read; but the bearing of it, fix'd my Attention, and put me upon sending him my Objections against it in a private manner.

The more I think of his Sermons, the more I am persuaded that they are contrary to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, and the Doctrine of our Church.

Acts 10. 34,
35.

The Scripture tells us, That God is no respecter of Persons: but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.

Resol. of Cases of Conscience, &c.
Pag. 5.

But the Doctor says, That the only visible way of forming a Church, (for I do not now speak of the invisible Operations of the Divine Spirit) is by granting a Church-Covenant, which is the Divine Charter whereon the Church is founded: And investing some Persons with Power and Authority to receive others into this Covenant, &c. And then to be taken into

Ilid.

Cove

To the Reader.

Covenant with God, and to be received into the Church, is the very same thing.

So it seems, according to him, no Man is in Covenant with God, who is not actually received into Covenant by a visible Church; that is, by the Bishops and Ministers of the Church, As he elsewhere has it, speaking of what makes any thing in a strict sense an Act of Church-Communion. Pag. 33.

Indeed he may seem to have a reserve, when he says he speaks not of the invisible Operations of the Spirit: Yet what room he leaves for that out of the Pale of a particular visible Church, is a great Question, when he confines the Influences and Operations of the Divine Spirit to the Unity of the Church: That is, if he speaks to the purpose, to Uniformity to that sound part of the Catholick Church where a Man lives. But if a Man fall into a Nation where there are no Bishops or inferior Clergy authorised by them, the Lord have Mercy upon his Soul: for 'tis a question how that Scripture can be fulfilled, which saith, God is no respecter of Persons, &c. P. 5. supra. Pag. 43.

But if the Bishops where he lives, fall out, Wo be to him if his Bishop be singular.

And God knows, but one of the Primitive Fathers, Tertullian, notwithstanding all his Zeal for the Christian Religion, lies in Purgatory to this day, with all his Followers, to St. Austin's Time: For though, as Dr. Cave says in his excuse, He lived in an Age when a greater latitude of opining was indulged; and good Men were infinitely more solicitous about Piety and a good Life, than about the Modes of Speech, and how to express every thing so critically, that it should not be liable to a severe Scrutiny and Examination. Yet this good Man having had Disputes with others of the Primitive Fathers; the Doctor tells us, Whether ever he was reconciled Cave's Antiq. Apostol. Fol. 211.

To the Reader.

reconciled to Catholick Communion appears not : 'tis certain, for the main, he forsook the *Cataphrygians*, and kept his *separate Meetings* at *Carthage*, and his Church was yet remaining in St. *Augustine's* time : By whose Labours, the very Reliques of his Followers called *Tertullianists*, were dispers'd and quite disappeared.

2dly.

What our Church determines in this case, we may see in the 19th Article. And I will leave it to Dr. Sherlock to reconcile himself to its Doctrine in this Point : Which is, That,

19th Artic.

The Church visible of Christ, is a Congregation of faithful Men, in which the pure Word of God is preached ; and the Sacraments be duly ministred, according to Christ's Ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

If any Man tax me with undermining the Authority of the Church, in objecting against Dr. Sherlock's way of supporting it, Dr. Stillingfleet has furnish'd me with a sufficient Apology ;

Dr. Stilling.
*Answer to
several Treas-
ises occasi-
on'd by his
Book about
Idolary.
Pag. 275.*

Men of any common understanding (*says he*) would distinguish between the necessities of Life and of civil Society : So would any one but S. C. or N. O. of the Necessaries to Salvation, and to the Government of the Church. For Men must be considered as Christians, and then as Christians united together. As in Civil Societies they are to be considered, first as Men, and then as *Cives*. To say that a Man hath all that is necessary to preserve his Life as a Man, doth not overthrow the Constitution of a Society, altho' it implies that he might live without it. So when Men are considered barely as Christians, no more ought to be thought necessary for them as such, but what makes them capable of Salvation. But if we consider them

To the Reader.

them as joining together in a Christian Society, then many other things are necessary for that end: For then there must be Authority in some, and Subjection in others; there must be Orders and Constitutions, whereby all must be kept within their due Bounds: And there must be Persons appointed to instruct the Ignorant, to satisfy the Doubting, to direct the Unskilful, and to help the Weak. It belongs to such a Society, not barely to provide for Necessity, but Safety; and not meerly the safety of particular Persons, but of it Self: which cannot be done, without prudent Orders fixing the Bounds of Mens Employments, and not suffering every pretender to Visions and Revelations, to set up for a new Sect, or which is all one, a new Order of Religious Men. Pag. 276.

This I should think were enough, not only to justify me, but to draw to my side all the moderate Church-men; yet that it may not be said that I bring but one Doctor's Opinion against another, I shall take in the Suffrage of the worthy Dean of Canterbury, and that delivered very solemnly in the presence of his Sacred Majesty.

I do assure you, (*says that great Man in his Sermon at Court*) I had much rather perswade any one to be a good Man, than to be of any Party or Denomination of Christians whatsoever; for I doubt not but the belief of the Ancient Creed, provided we entertain nothing that is destructive of it, together with a good Life, will certainly save a Man; and without this, no Man can have reasonable hopes of Salvation, no not in an infallible Church, if there were any such to be found in the World. Dr. Tillotson's Sermon on 1 Cor. 3-15. last Ed. Pag. 59.

But since the settling the true Notion of Schism will go a great way towards the satisfying our Enquiries in this Matter, it may not be improper to transcribe some part of
Dr.

To the Reader.

Dr. Stilling.
Rational Ac-
count. p. 359.

Dr. Stillingfleet's sense of it, where he vindicates the Church of England from the imputation of Schism; The Being of the Catholick Church, says he, lies in essentials, for a Particular Church to disagree from all other Particular Churches, in some extrinsecal and accidental Things, is not to separate from the Catholick Church, so as to cease to be a Church; but still, whatever Church makes such extrinsecal things the necessary Conditions of Communion, so as to cast Men out of the Church, who yield not to them, is Schismatical in so doing; for it thereby divides it self from the Catholick Church; and the Separation from it, is so far from being Schism, that being cast out of that Church on those terms only, returns them to the Communion of the Catholick Church. On which ground it will appear, that the Church of Rome is the Schismatical Church, and not Ours. For, although before this imposing Humour came into particular Churches, Schism was defin'd by the Fathers, and others, to be a voluntary departure out of the Church; yet that cannot in reason be understood of any Particular, but the true Catholick Church: for not only Persons, but Churches may depart from the Catholick Church: and in such Cases, not those who depart from the Communion of such Churches, but those Churches which depart from the Catholick, are guilty of the Schism.

Three LETTERS to Dr. Sherlock,
upon his Sermons concerning Church-
Communion.

Reverend Sir,

NOT doubting but you will be willing to stoop to the capacity of the meanest of your Auditors; I who have often heard you with great satisfaction, and I hope not without edifying thereby, take leave to intimate to you, as high as I can, in your own words, what I conceive to have been the substance of your Discourse this last Sunday, upon 1 Cor. 12. 27. [*Now we are the Body of Christ, and Members in particular.*] And to propound some *Queries*, which perhaps you may think fit, in some part at least, to take notice of in your further progress upon this nice Subject. However I hope you will candidly interpret this friendly Intimation from one who is a Member of the same Church with you, and is as hearty in his desires of a firm Union amongst Protestants as any Man can be: And therefore is the more concern'd at any Discourse which may represent all Dissenters, as such, as Men depriv'd of the ordinary means of Salvation, and consequently to be in as bad a case as the Moral Heathens. And (as most Men of such Notions believe, or would infer) in a worse condition than those of the Romish Com-

B

munion.

munion. Which I hope was not in your Intention, how liable soever your Assertions may seem to that Interpretation. Nor but that many things which you then taught us are of a far different import.

Be pleas'd to take your own again, with as little alteration of the words, or order in which they were delivered, as may be, without the Repetition of many things, whereby tis convenient to lengthen out a Sermon.

You may remember that you told us, That,

'The Church is a Body of Men separated from the
'World, and united to God and themselves by a Divine
'Covenant: That tis an entire Body, and every Member
'united to the whole Church by Christian Communion.
'That our Saviour ordained the Apostles, and gave the
'Government of the Church to them and their Successors,
'with a promise to be with them to the end of the World.
'That there can be but one Church where all Privileges
'and Duties are common, And but one and the same In-
'stitution of God's Appointment: That the Gospel-Cov-
'enant is the Foundation of the Christian Church: God
'only can make a Church, nor Man's Invention. The co-
'ly way God has of forming a Church is, by granting
'Church-Covenant, and investing some Persons with
'power of receiving others according to the Terms, with
'such Rites as they are pleas'd to institute. As that can
'be no Church which is not in Covenant with God, so he
'can be no Member who is not visibly admitted into Co-
'venant.

You farther observ'd, under distinct Heads

1. That a Covenant-State, and a Church-State, is the same.
2. Every profess'd Christian received into Covenant is a Member.
3. Nothing else is necessary to make Members but Baptism.
4. A Church-State cannot depend upon humane Contract or Covenant : 'Tis God's Covenant which is in our Church required of the Adult. The Independents found their Church upon humane Contract, which they will not say is any part of the Baptismal Vow.
5. 'Tis absurd to gather Churches out of Churches of Baptiz'd Christians.
6. The Doctrine of the Unity of the Church confirm'd from the Notion of a Charter to any Body Politick. They who are not admitted into the Corporation, have no right to the Privileges ; and are Usurpers, if they exercise any Act belonging to the Members. God considers all Men as united into one Church or Body, has made no Covenant with *Geneva* or *England* in particular. The only thing that can give us right to Church-Membership, is to observe the Conditions of the Covenant. He destroys the Unity of the Church, who is not subject to its Censures. Every Member is a Member of the Whole : Baptism does not make us Members of any particular Church, but of the Universal, founded only on Divine Covenant. Every Act of Christian Communion must be an Act of Communion with the whole Church : And 'tis impossible to live in Communion with the whole, without Communion with some part, when it may be had : 'Tis necessary to communicate with some Church, by

' Communion with the Church in which we live, *if it be a*
 ' sound Member, I communicate with the whole. Accord-
 ' ing to the Primitive Rule of but one Bishop in a City,
 ' they who divide from the National Church are guilty of
 ' Schism. Nothing can justify Division, but such a di-
 ' stance as hinders the Exercise of Joint-Communion.

To sum up what I take to be the force of all this.

The Apostles and their Successors were by our Saviour invested with a power of receiving Members into his Church upon his Terms, and with such Rites as they should think fit. And they who are not so receiv'd into the Church, have no right to any of the Benefits promis'd to the Members of Christ's Body.

This Power is by an uninterrupted Succession deriv'd upon the Governors of our National Church; Wherefore all others that pretend to the exercise of this Power within this Nation, are Usurpers: And all the Laity baptiz'd by their Pastors, not being duly admitted into any particular Church, are so far from being Members of Christ's Body, that they are Usurpers and Traitors to that Power which is deriv'd from him in a right Line. *During his Sermon.*

Wherefore I may well upon the whole desire, that you would seriously consider;

(1.) Whether a pious Dissenter, suppos'd to be received into the Church by such as he believes to be fully invested with sufficient Church-power, is in as bad a condition as a moral Heathen, or in a worse than a Papist?

(2.) Whether the submission to the Power and Censures of this Church (which all must own to be a sound Church) be part of the Divine Covenant, which unites the Mem-

bers of the Catholick Church to God and to each other ? If it be, then as he who is not admitted into this Church, is no Member of the Catholick, and has no right to the Benefits of being a Member of Christ's Body : So it is with every one excluded by Church-Censures, though excommunicated for a slight contempt or neglect, nay for a wrongful Cause.

If it be no part of the Divine Covenant, then a Man that lives here may be a true Member of the Catholick Church, though he is not in Communion with this found Church.

But you will say, (which I think is not much to this Question), That he ought to communicate if Communion may be had.

But then *Query*, Whether the Dissenters may not reply, That they are ready to communicate, if the Communion be not ellogg'd with some things which are no part of the Divine Covenant ? As for instance, An adult Person would be baptized if he could be admitted without the Sign of the Cross : Or would receive the Sacrament, if he might not be obliged to kneel ; Which he supposes to have been in use, and required, only since the Doctrine of Transubstantiation divided the Church.

Yet however, *Query* ;

(3.) Whether where Communion may not be had upon those Terms which our Saviour Instituted, a Church may not, at least in some cases, be gathered, without any immediate derivation from other Church-Governors besides Christ himself ? if it may not, What think you of a Lay-Christian quietly permitted to teach the Word of God amongst Heathens, and to Disciple such as will receive his Doctrine ? If a Church in such case may be erected, then surely God's only way of forming Churches, and investing
force

Some Persons with Power of receiving others, is not from a constant succession from the Apostles, but from under his Institution who has appointed a Power in his Church, which expires no more with any particular Governors than the Power of Kings, his Vicegerents, dies in any Nation for want of some Monarch just going before, from whom the Claim is to be made. Though the Power of a King be God's Power, yet I dare say you will own, that at least in some Kingdoms, a King may be duly chosen to this Power by Men.

You will say perhaps, (though still the force of my Objection will remain) that this is an extraordinary Case of utmost necessity, not to be instanced in amongst us. But then I ask;

1. *Whether* upon allowing no other Case, you will not put the Being of our Church upon a very hazardous Issue; and oblige your self to prove that it was a True Church before the Reformation?

2. *Whether* supposing this Church to have been Antichristian before, (which I think is the Doctrine of our Homilies); The Case I put of a Layman's discipling Heathens, supposes a more violent necessity of acting without Authority from a succession of Church-Officers, than at least 'tis possible may be the Case of our own Church?

(4.) 2. *Whether* from the Supposition, that there ought to be but one Church-Covenant throughout the Catholick Church, that there cannot be one True Church within another; and that the nature of Catholick-Communion is such, that one ought to be ready to communicate with any sound Church, from which one is not hindred by reason of the distance of place? It do's not follow;

I. Either that the French Protestants have no Church here, but are Schismatics in not communicating with ours;

ours; Or that ours is guilty of Schism, in making the Terms of Communion so streight, that it is not the Duty of every one (though a licenced Stranger) to communicate with this Church.

2. Does it not follow from the Obligation to communicate, or to be ready to communicate with any True Church where distance does not hinder, that a Member of the Church of *England* is not obliged to constant Communion with that Church, but may occasionally communicate with the French Church; Nay with Dissenters too, if he believes that any of their Congregations is a true Member of the Catholick Church?

If they may, then constant Communion is not always a Duty where occasional is lawful.

Dr. *Stillingfleet* indeed says, That if a Man were obliged to be a Member of the French Church, or the like, and thought it lawful to communicate sometimes, constant Communion would be a Duty. But according to you no Man is obliged to be a Member of one sound Church more than another, provided the distance is not so great, but that he may communicate with both.

(5.) *Query*, Whether a true Christian, though not visibly admitted into Church-Communion, where he wants the means, has not a virtual Baptism in the Answer of a good Conscience towards God? according to 1 Pet. 3, 21.

(6.) *Query*, Why a profess'd Atheist who has been Baptiz'd, and out of secular Interest continues a Communicant with this Church, is more a Member of the Catholick Church than such as are above described?

(7.) *Query*, Whether as the Catholick Church is compar'd to a Body of Men incorporated by one Charter,
upon

upon supposition of a possibility of the Forfeiture of a Charter to the whole Body, by the miscarriages of any of the Officers, Does it likewise follow that the Miscarriages of Church-Officers, or the Church Representative, as I remember Bishop *Sanderfon* calls the Clergy, may forfeit the Privileges given by Christ to his Church, or at least may suspend them? As suppose a Protestant Clergy, taking their Power to be as large as the Church of *Rome* claim'd, should deny the Laity the Sacraments, as the Popish did in *Venice*, and here in King *John's* Time, during the Interdicts. *Quid inde operatur?*

But more particularly I shall make Observations upon these following Positions.

1. You say, Our Saviour made the Apostles and their Successors Governors of his Church, with promise to be with them to the end of the World.
2. That 'tis absurd to gather a Church out of a Church of Baptiz'd Christians.
3. That the Independents separate from Catholick Communion, by adding a New Covenant, no part of the Baptistical Vow.

For the first: I desire to be satisfied in these Particulars.

1. Whether our Saviour's Promise of Divine Assistance, did not extend to all the Members of the Church, considering every Man in his respective Station and Capacity, as well as to the Apostles as Church-Governors? for which you may compare *St. John* with *St. Matthew*.
2. Therefore *Query*, Whether it signifies any thing to say there is no Promise to Particular Churches, provided there be to Particular Persons, such as are in Charity with all

all Men, and are ready to communicate with any Church which requires no more of them, than what they conceive to be their Duty, according to the Divine Covenant ?

3. Whether if the Promise you mention be confin'd to the Apostles, as Church-Governors, it will not exclude the Civil Power ?

4. What was the extent of the Promise, Whether it was to secure the whole Church, that its Governors should never impose unlawful Terms of Communion, or that there should never be a general defection of all the Members of the Catholick Church ; but that there should always be some true Members ?

But secondly, you say, 'Tis absur'd to gather a Church out of a Church of baptized Christians.

By which I suppose you mean that Men ought not to separate from such, and live in a distinct Church-Communion from any Church of baptized Christians ; which I conceive needs explaining.

But as it was worded, I desire to know,

1. Whether it is absurd for Protestants to live in Church-Communion with each other in *France*, separating from the Papists, whose is the National Church ?

2. Whether the Civil Power did not make a lawful Reformation and Separation from the Popish Church in *England* ?

3. Whether as in the Primitive Times there was but one Bishop, and consequently but one Church in a City, there are not now as many Churches within the National as there are Bishopricks ?

4. Whether is it more absurd that there should be Independent or Presbyterian Churches within the National, than that there should be so many Bishopricks ?

5. Suppose it possible for every of their Congregations to be a Church, with sufficient Church-Officers and Power, then may they not communicate with a sound part of the Catholick-Church without actual Communion with the National : And consequently all that you have said of their Schism will fall.

6. Admit they bring but colourable Proof for this, yet if it be enough to make honest-minded Men believe it, dare you say that those who so believe are no true Members of Christ's Body ? For God's sake, Sir, consider this, and think with your self, whether your Charity exceeds that of the Romish Church ?

3dly, You suppose that the Independents exclude themselves from Catholick Communion, by requiring of their Members a New Contract, no part of the Baptismal Vow. Upon this I ask,

1. Whether any Obstacle to Catholick Communion brought in by Men, may not be a means of depriving Men of it, as well as Covenant or Contract ?

2. If it may, which I suppose you will not deny, will you not then, upon this account, make the Church you live in more guilty than you do the Independents ? Baptism you own is the only thing which admits into the Catholick Church ; but they require no New Covenant at Baptism, *ergo*, they admit into the Church without any clog or hindrance of humane Invention.

But

But *Query*, Whether if an adult Person may not be received to Baptism without being sign'd with the sign of the Cross: Which some, at least, may honestly scruple, especially such as read the Canon, which explains the sense in which 'tis used. How is this justifiable upon your Ground?

The 30th Canon calls it, *a lawful outward Ceremony and honourable Badge*; whereby the Infant is dedicated to the Service of him who died upon the Cross.

Lastly, I take leave to ask a few *Questions* about the meaning of your Text and Context.

1. *Query*. Whether to say ye are the Body, and ye are of the Body, be the same?

2 Whether therefore the Individual Church of *Corinth* is not here made an entire Body, of which every Christian in Communion with it was a particular Member?

3. And whether 'tis absurd that our Saviour should have a Metaphorical Body, which is in him, and he in it; Where-ever there is a number of True Believers following all the Institutes, and exercising all the Discipline which they can have, according to the best of their understanding and means?

4. Whether when Schism is in the 25th Verse used in opposition to having *the same care for one another*, it does not shew that Schism consists not in the dividing Communion through difference of Opinions, but through want of Charity, and that care which Christians in the same Neighbourhood ought to have of each other.

After all that I have offer'd to your consideration, I must own that these are the sudden thoughts of one who believes he may be saved without understanding the Notion of Church-Government as 'tis intregud between Clergy-men of all sides. And believes the Church of England to be a True Church, notwithstanding it and the Romish might formerly have been Antichristian; though a learned *London* Minister pretends not to understand how then this should come to be true.

J. 30. 1681.

The Second LETTER.

S I R,

NOT doubting your candor and integrity, I went to Church this day with full expectation of your attempting, at least, to clear your way from the Objections I had sent you, before you expatiated upon your, as I may call it, uncharitable Hypothesis. Surely every thing which I urged is not to be contemned; but I must needs say, I could not meet with one Passage in your last Sermon which look'd like so much as an offer towards my satisfaction: Wherefore I conjure you, as a Protestant Divine, to answer my Doubts categorically. For which end, I hope you will not refer me to what Mr. D——or any profess Papist has wrote on this Subject, unless you will avow all that they have said on the necessity of the intention of the Priest to concur with his Acts, or otherwise.

Your last Discourse occasions only my adding this farther *Query*.

Whether if the nature of Catholick Communion requires a readiness to communicate with any sound Church, and yet a Church obliges us to communicate with that alone, while distance does not hinder the occasional and frequent communion with others? Is not that Church guilty of Schism in such an Injunction, contrary to the nature of Catholick Communion?

O:

Or at least is it not impossible that he who communicates sometimes with one True Church, sometimes with another, can be a Schismatick, or any more than an Offender against a positive humane Law.

Be pleased to send me your thoughts upon the particulars of my enquiry to &c. directed to,

Ph. 4. 1687.

S I R,

Your Servant,

Anonymus.

The

The Third LETTER.

Feb. 19. 1683.

S I R,

Since it is more than probable that I have occasioned the speedy printing of your Discourses concerning *Church-Communion*. I am now become a Debtor to the *Churches of God*, to publish those 1 Cor. 9. 16. Objections which arose in my mind, and which you have not yet thought fit to answer, though earnestly press'd thereunto.

And me thinks you who have heretofore been a zealous Patron for universal Grace, should be very ready to clear your self from the least imputation of stinting it more than our most gracious God, nay than your most narrow-principled Adversaries have ever done.

Though he who questions the Dictates of his Spiritual Guide, had need run to the protection of Obscurity; yet one would think, that he who prints in the dark what he publish'd on the House top, before the Face of the Congregation, brings a foul suspicion upon his Doctrine. 'Tis well known that the Pulpit is more licens'd from Contradiction than the Press; wherefore the former is most properly assigned for a Clergy-mans Recantation: Nor indeed did I think you far from making publick satisfaction, when you own'd, (in your Sermon preach'd Feb. 11. on *Luke 12. vers. 4. 5.*) 'That the Censures of the Church are formidable only when duly applied; and that God Almighty

has

' has not trusted fallible Men with a power of shutting out
' those whom he will receive.

*The Dr's. Resol.
of Cases of Con-
science, with re-
spect to Church-
Com. p. 49.*

Keep to this, and make good your No-
tion of *Schism* if you can; If *Schism* be,
as you say, a very great Sin, and such a
will damn us, as soon as *Adultery* and *Mur-
der*, God forbid that it should consist in
such ticklish Points as would place many
thousands of truly charitable and pious Men within the
fatal Roll.

But to my thinking, while you blame Men for having
no Notion at all of a Church, or no Notion of
Ib. pag. 50. one Church, and that they know not wherein
the Unity and Communion of this Church
consists, you remove their Guilt, and grant that their
Schism is involuntary, and only an Error of their Un-
derstandings. Alas! mistaken honest Men, how unhappy
is your condition, who must be damn'd for not under-
standing Dr. *Sherlock*, when he fancies that he puts Mat-
ters past all doubt! tho others may think he only amuses
People with equivocal Words and Terms.

I beg of you to consider, whether you do not impose
upon your self, or would not upon others by a confused
notion of the Church, and of separation from it, wherein
you make *Schism* to consist.

Great is *Diana* of the *Ephesians*, and great is the use of
the word Church, when good *Crafts-masters* have the hand-
ling of it; and of all Men those of *Rome* have succeeded
best at this play of words. By the using it indefinitely
as you do, the Pope keeps the Keys of Heaven and
Hell at his Girdle; and truly this in some Cases compre-
hends things as different as Heaven and Hell are, such as
shall be sav'd, and such as are already under the dominion
of Satan. If you use it for several purposes, I hope for
the

the future you will define what you mean by the *Church*, when you are to consider it as Catholic and Universal, what when you take it in a more restrain'd sence, otherwise you speak not like a Minister of the Gospel, but as one that would pervert that use of words which in you especially God Almighty designed for instructing us candidly in the Truth.

Indeed you may play a little more securely with the word *Schism*, because (unless it be taken to lie wholly in want of Charity) People may not so well understand what it is, how distinctly soever the Notion of *Churches* be taught them; surely 'tis much a question whether it lies wholly in causeless separation from a sound part of the *Catholic Church*. To my thinking, St. Paul when he speaks of it, supposes a continuance still of the same Body, and ascribes it to Christians continuing such, nay, and communicating with each other. Thus writing to the *Corinthians*, of whom he says;

You are the Body of Christ, and Members in particular. He tells you, to this effect, that there is but one Spirit which communicates it self amongst them in various Dispensations, and enables them, according to their different Capacities and Attainments, to promote each others growth in Grace. And then having compared them to the several parts of a natural Body;

God, saith he, hath tempered the Body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. *Vers. 24.*

That there should be no *Schism* in the Body, but that the Members should have the same care for one another. *Vers. 25.*

D

Which

Which seems no more than that God obliges the Members of his Church to live together charitably, and to be ready to assist each other from the consideration of the distribution of his Gifts and Graces in such manner, that even the meanest and most despised Christian may administer Aid and Comfort to those that are in the highest Station.

1 Cor. 14.

But all this was written to the Church at Corinth, that Body of Christ there, which assembled together in the same place, and yet the Apostle charges them with real Schism; for, says he;

1 Cor. 3. 3.

Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions; are ye not carnal, and walk as Men?

But from the Apostle's Notion of Schism, I shall come to yours, as you have jumbled it together with the equivocal word Church; of which you would make one believe, that there can be no true Idea, but as particular visible, nay, and that national too; wherefore be pleased to weigh a little with your self:

*Cases of Con-
science con-
cerning Church
Communion. p. 10.*

1. Whether you do not appropriate that to the National Church, which belongs to the Catholick visible and invisible? As where you say,

Pag. 13.
Pag. 5.

No Man has a right to any *All* of Christian Communion, but he who is in a state of Communion with the Christian Church. That no Man is in Communion with a Church which he is not a Member of: And that he is no Member of the Church, who is not at least visibly admitted into God's Covenant by Baptism.

Now I would ask you this plain Question.

Whether a Man has a right to be of a particular Church, as he is a Christian; that is, I should think,

a true Member of the *Catholic Church*: or becomes a Christian only as receiv'd into a particular *Church*? I take it, Infants are received with us, by virtue of the federal right in the Parents; and as the Apostle says, *The believing Wife sanctifies the unbelieving Husband, else were the Children unclean.* Nor I conceive doth our Church receive any adult Person, whom it does not believe to be a true Christian before?

But to make your Fallacy the more evident, you tell us;

' The Divine Spirit confines his Influences *Page 48.*
' and Operations to the Unity of the Church,
' as the same Apostle tells us, That there is
' but one Body, and one Spirit; which plain-
' ly signifies that the Operations of this one
' Spirit are appropriated to this one Body, as
' the Soul is to the Body it animates.

I would fain know what need any Man has to deny this for avoiding the Consequence, that therefore 'tis an improper way for *edification*, to forsake Communion with a National sound Church where he lives; for the Apostle makes it as plain as words can make it, that he speaks of the *Invisible*, as well as *Visible Church*. For the Passage you cite, *Ephes.* 4. 4. is but a continuation of what the Apo-

He taught in the foregoing Chapter, where he says;

Eph. 3. 14. For this cause I bow my Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vers. 15. Of whom the whole Family in Heaven and in Earth is named.

Eph. 4. 16. This which is there called a Family, is elsewhere the whole Body of which Christ is the Head, the increase and edifying of which Body in love is ascribed to his Influence. If I should enter my self of another Family, not owned by Christ, I thereby should renounce all claim to the Promises of the Gospel: But admit several parts of this great Family live by different Customs and Rules, not owning each others Members for their own; in which case you will have them separate Churches, as well as upon the account of Doctrine, Government, or Worship, provided the things wherein they differ, and for which they make distinct Communions, are not destructive of common Christianity; doth he put himself out of Christ's Family, who can and actually doth comply with the Rules and Customs of both? One would think that a Member of the Church of England communicating with Presbyterians here, does not thereby enter into a state of Separation, even from

from this Particular Church, because he does not *thereby* so much as virtually renounce the Communion of our Church, being nothing is required of him to capacitate him for Communion with them which is not required in our Church, much less any thing contrary to it; and perhaps the Independents may come within the last circumstance: But to be sure, neither of them forsake our Church in what essentially constitutes it a Church of Christ: and therefore it does yet remain a Question, whether this can be a separation from the Communion of *Catholick Church*, that happy Family above-mentioned.

You know even, in the Primitive Times, about the end of the second Century, there fell out a Division between the *Latin* and *Asian Churches*, and that upon what one would think were neither Matter of *Doctrine*, of *Government*, nor of *Worship*, for it was only about the Time of keeping *Easter Holy-day*. *Victor* the Bishop of the *Latin Church*, in a *Council*, or as some will have it, a full representative of that *Church* excommunicates the poor *Asians* for a little mistake in *Arithmetick*; each Church was far from owning the others *Members as its own*. Here was a *Schism*, perhaps on both sides, especially
on

- on theirs who were so peremptory in imposing their own computation for *Catholick*. But what should the poor Lay Christians do in this divided state, could they not Communicate with both, or either, without danger of Schism themselves? or, was it as necessary to know which was in the right, as to know *which is the True Religion*? 'Twas not enough in such case to know *which of these divided Communions was a true and sound Member of the Catholick Church*; which when known, they were bound to communicate with; for here both were sound Members, at least they might be, notwithstanding this Difference: And yet according to you, they who communicated with both these, were *contrary to themselves, and on one side or other were sure to be Schismaticks*: and if you please, you may say the *Prayers and Sacraments in those Churches, were not Acts of Christian Communion, but of Schismatical Combinations.*
- Pag. 37.
- Pag. 39.
- Pag. 40.
- Pag. 17.

2dly.

But, secondly, I must desire you to consider, whether you do not enforce the necessity of communicating with the *National Church*, from Arguments which prove no more, than that Men ought to serve God in publick in distinct Congregations, as well as in private, and

and so apply that to a *National Church*, which belongs to the *Church* in a more limited sense? But this is no wonder, since you manifestly go upon the Supposition, that there can be no *True Church* which is not *National*, at least, which is not the only true Church within the *Nation* or *City* where one resides. Upon which Ground you affirm; That,

'*Actua* Communion, during our residence Pag. 23.
'in any certain place, must be confined to that
'particular Church in which we live, if it be
'a sound part of the Christian Church; or, as
you self where vary it, 'the sound and orthodox
'Part of the Catholick Church which he finds
'in that place.

Now if there be a possibility, that there should be several sound and orthodox Parts in the same place, be it the same City or same Nation, all your building here falls to the Ground. Wherefore I desire you to consider, whether it is not possible that at *Aleppo*, for the purpose, or any other place where the *National Religion* is *Ethnick*, there may be several sound parts of the *Catholick Church*, as the *Greek* or the *French Protestants*, and the *English Churches*, with either of which one may communicate as sound parts of the *Catholick*?

But

Pag. 33.

Acts 2. 42.

But to come back to your method of bringing all into the *National*, you tell us that you
 'suppose no Man will deny but that every
 'Christian is bound to worship God according
 'to our Saviour's Institution ; and what that is,
 'we cannot learn better than from the Exam-
 'ple of the Primitive Christians ; of whom
 'St. Luke gives us this account, *They continued*
'stedfast in the Apostles Doctrine and Worship, and
'in breaking of Bread.

According to your own Argument here, would it not seem that the only Church of our Saviour's instituting, is such an one as is described 1 Cor. 14. 23. where 'tis said, *If therefore the whole Church be come together into one place, and all speak with Tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*

Pray, Sir, is it absurd to suppose, that there should be several such Churches in a City? May not every one of these have lawful terms of communion, such as an honest minded Christian may submit unto, though some of them may have harder than others? May not such a Man be more especially united in Communion, (be it as a Member, or how you will call it) to that which he thinks the best, and
 yet

yet occasionally communicate with others, without being an occasional Member of Christ's Body which, is but one, united in Charity under differences of Opinions and Practices?

Admit that two of these Churches divide from each other by separate *Communion*, and by making more things necessary to *Communion* with either than Christ made, make a *Schism* *Pag. 49.* and *Rent in Christ's Body*; why does it follow that he who can and does communicate with both, as requiring nothing of him which he looks upon as sinful, must needs be guilty of *Schism*? which if you think it a clearer Expression, you may call *communicating in a Ibid. Schism.*

To follow you in your Repetitions, to this purpose you assert, 'That we must perform *Pag. 41.* the constant Acts of Communion in that part of the Catholick Church, in which we constantly live and communicate occasionally, with that part of the Church where we are occasionally present. And that,

'There cannot be two distinct Churches in *Pag. 42.* the same place, one for occasional, and another for constant Communion without *Schism*: for it is evident those two are distinct

‘*Communiions*, and that our Relation to them is
 ‘as different as it is to an House we live in, and
 ‘to an Inn where we lodg for a Night.

But it is evident that one of these must need
 be cut off from Christ’s Body; if not, why
 may I not communicate with one, or both,
 and thereby communicate with the *Catholick*
Church? But besides, how came you here to
 talk of a different Relation, and as if that
 look’d like *occasional Membership*, by which you
 elsewhere would expose such Communion?
 When before you had told us, That the *Com-*
munion of the Church does not make us Members of
any particular Church.

Pag. 39.

Pag. 14.

Then again, how does it appear that it is
 necessary to communion with the *Catholick*
Church, that we must perform the constant *Acts of*
Communion, in that part of the *Catholick Church*
 where we constantly lives.

Farther, is it self-evident that I am bound
 to communicate so much as sometimes with a
 sound part of the *Catholick Church*, because
 I live where there is such an one? You may re-
 member vvhhat Mr. *Chillingworth* said to this
 purpose, with the approbation of the great
 Learned Men of his Time.

Pag. 15.

‘If, says that Admirable Author, you require
 the

the belief of any Error among the conditions
 of your Communion, our Obligation to
 communicate with you ceases, and so the
 imputation of Schism to us vanishes into no-
 thing, but lies heavy upon you for making
 our Separation from you just and necessary,
 by requiring *unnecessary* and unlawful con-
 ditions of Communion.

Truly I should think that that which essenti-
 ally makes one a Member of Christ, and so of
 his Church, is the Faith of the Lord Jesus
 Christ, this is fundamental to it, intrinsecal
 and essential. What is external and visible in
 respect of the Members which are gathered to
 Christ the Head of the Church, is subject to
 changes and various circumstances of this out-
 ward World. And 'twould be an hard case
 with us, if what is not within our power, as
 the derivation of an uninterrupted succession
 of Church-Officers, or the like, should be
 the concernment of our Souls.

To this purpose, I cannot omit another Pas-
 sage of Mr. *Chillingworth's*.

'I believe, *says he*, our Saviour ever since *Page 13.*
 his Ascension, hath had, in some place or o-
 ther, a visible true Church on Earth, I mean,
 a company of Men that professed at least so

‘ much as was necessary to Salvation ; and I
 ‘ believe there vwill be somevwhere or other
 ‘ such a Church to the World’s end.

I am sure your Notions tend to the destroying the foundation of all Mr. *Chillingworth’s* Arguments : and methinks you should be loth to deprive Protestantism of such a Champion, though by the baffling him, you might the more securely triumph over that part of it to which you seem to oppose your self.

Pag. 5.

I will not here dispute (because it alters not the state of any Question which I sent you) whether I mistook you, or you have since corrected what you preach’d concerning the *Rites of Admission into the Church*. Now you tell us that the Persons invested with *Power and Authority to receive others into the Church-Covenant*, must do it according to the terms and conditions of the *Covenant* ; and by such *Covenant-Rites, and Forms of Admission*, as he, viz. God, is pleased to institute ; which under the Gospel is *Baptism*, as under the Law it was *Circumcision*. Truly I had thought you had said, such Rites as they, viz. the Church-Governors, fallible Men, had thought fit, which is but needful to your Hypothesis. But if the *Rites and Forms of Admission* must be of God’s institution, what think you of the Sign of
 the

the Cross, of which Dr. Stillingfleet says, *As Baptism is a Rite of Admission into Christ's Catholick Church, so the Sign of the Cross is into our Church.* *Mischief of Separat. P. 35th*
 But then, as Baptism is compared unto Circumcision, does not the Apostle decide the Question, when he tells us, That *Circumcision* *Rom. 2. 29.*
is that of the Heart?

I have only one farther Consideration to press to you, which is, That you would seriously bethink your self, whether your method of converting these damnable Schismatics, who are in your Opinion as bad as *Murderers and Adulterers*, be not the most effectual means of keeping up the Schism? If want of Charity makes Schismatics, surely this is not the way to convince them that that guilt lies at their Door. Certainly if our Church required conformity to its Rites and Ceremonies as necessary to Salvation, it could not blame Men for dividing from it; and he who tells us, or he says nothing, That *the Divine Spirit* *Perf. 49th*
confines his Influences and Operations to the Unity of the Church, in such Conformity, not only makes such Conformity necessary to Salvation, but imputes to the Church the Damnation of many thousands of Souls, who might expect to be saved upon other terms.

Page 47. I hope you are none of those that think Dissenters come in too fast, and that they are to be preach'd out again. I heartily wish they could conquer all their Scruples, that we might not only have such love and sympathy as is peculiar to the Members of the same Body: which I hope all good Christians have as Members of Christ's Body, though of different Communion, but that all might be able to go to the House of God together, as Friends, of one Mind and one Heart.

For my part, if I had any Scruples of this kind, they would arise from what our Churchmen infuse; and when you talk of the danger of communicating in a Schism, it would make me bethink my self, whether the Church with which I communicate, may not be guilty of imposing something or other contrary to the nature of Catholick Communion, or beyond the Power entrusted with it, for edification and not for destruction.

If you had pleas'd, this Controversy had bin managed in a more private manner; but since you have thought fit to print, you have hereby determined the choice of

(SIR)

Your humble Servant, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since my writing the foregoing Letter, I received your Book, particularly directed to *Anonymus*: By which I am obliged to believe, either that you avow the Consequences which I formerly urg'd to you, or think them not rightly inferr'd: If the first, I have nothing more to say to you, only to entreat you to consider, whether you would not perswade Men to Uniformity, by means which tend to the getting a low opinion of God himself, and of all reveal'd Religion? If the last be made appear to me, assure your self I will not long conceal my Conviction.

Feb. 24. 1687.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

- Page 17. l. 11. read *Christian-Charity*.
 lb. l. 22. read *them*.
 Page 21. l. 13. add *she* before *Catholic*.

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